2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

2. *Hoti.*—A tribe situated south of Gruda and extending to the lake of Scutari. It owned also large winter pastures on the plains by the Boyana, and, as do the other Maltsia e Madhe tribes, descended yearly with great flocks. But in 1913, when both Hoti and Gruda were given by the Powers to Montenegro, the frontier line deprived them of their winter pasture. The gentlemen sent to draw frontiers had their heads full only of "strategy," and would not see that they were condemning a people to die of hunger. Both Gruda and Hoti have been thus ruined.

When I knew the tribe it was all Catholic but three houses—those of the bairaktar, which became Moslem seven generations before, after winning great honour from the Turks in a fight against Dulcigno. Marash Hutzi, the hereditary surgeon of the tribe, a singularly charming and intelligent old man, told me that the ancestor of Hoti, Geg Laz, came from Bosnia, and arrived with all his family shortly after the building of the church of Gruda. On arriving they found people, "Anas," living on the land and settled among them. From these "Anas" twelve houses of Hoti trace descent, and are intermarriageable with the descendants of Geg Laz. From what part of Bosnia they came he could not tell. Geg was head of a large family group of herdsmen which trekked southward, doubtless to escape serfdom under a Moslem overlord. Geg Laz had three brothers: Piper Laz, Vaso Laz, and Krasni Laz. Piper and Vaso, as we shall see, were ancestors of the Piperi and Vasojevitch tribes, which became Montenegrin in the eighteenth century. Krasni was ancestor of the Moslem Albanian tribe Krasnichi. Thus of the four, two are now Serbophone and Orthodox; one Catholic and Albanophone, and the other Moslem and Albanophone.

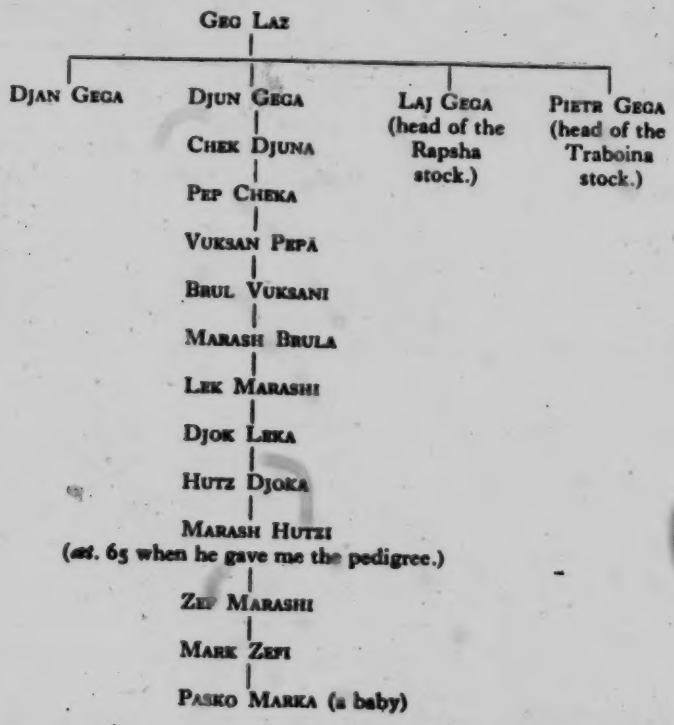
Hoti, when I knew it, was the leader tribe of Maltsia e Madhe, and had earned this right by valour in war. Hoti's energy in 1878 thwarted the decree of the Berlin Congress and saved Tuzhi and the Plava-Gusinje districts from Montenegro. My poor old friend, Marash Hutzi, told how he, as a young man, had rushed round and summoned Hoti to the rescue, and put such a force on the frontier that Montenegro dared not risk occupying the districts.

Geg Laz had four sons, each of whom became head of a group ("vlaznii"). Marash gave his pedigree as in the table on the page opposite.

In few other lands in Europe can a man give the names of his forbears for three hundred years. Poor Marash, who was one of the best, died of pneumonia during the revolt of the tribes against Turkish rule in 1911. His house and all he owned was burnt. I met him in an exhausted state among the refugees. He smiled and pulled from his breast the two picture postcards I had sent him from London, the nly things he had saved from the wreck. I helped him, and he begged

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

me not to give him more than his share. One of the Franciscans gave him shelter, for he was generally beloved, but he did not survive the winter. I mourned him at the time, but was later glad that he had died before his beloved tribe was handed to the enemy. The name "Hoti" is older than the arrival of Geg Laz. Jirecek, quoting the Venetian archives, states that the Hoti ("montanea Ottanorum") allied itself in 1474 with Ivan Tzrnojevitch and fought the Turks. The "Anas" must then have been numerous.



The tribe of Nikaj (see below) is also related to Hoti. Marash Hutzi said that Nikaj descends from a son of Krasnich. Baron Nopcsa learnt from another quarter that Nik was another brother of Geg Laz. That they are related is clear, for they are not intermarriageable.

Hoti usually marries the neighbour tribe Kastrati. As Kastrati mainly marries Hoti, after so many generations the two must be very closely related. But old Marash was extremely proud of the strict exogamy of the tribe. To marry "one's own blood" he looked on with unspeakable horror. I asked how many generations must pass before the descendants

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173 dark people inhabiting the land, with whom they intermarried. Eight houses near Abate, in lower Shala, trace descent from these old inhabi-
142 tants. The rest of them migrated to Dechani. The Albanians I saw at Dechani in 1903 were certainly all of the small dark type.

614 Shala consists of four bairaks: Thethi, Petsaj, Lothaj, and Lekaj. The three latter are said to have separated into three groups 376 years
[613 582] ago (told me in 1908). Lothaj and Lekaj recently decided they were far enough removed to be intermarriageable. But Shoshi and Mirdita still would not marry with them.

The bairak of Thethi consists of 180 houses. In these mountains a "house" is far more numerous than in the Maltsia e Madhe. Large communal "houses" still exist, of as many as thirty or forty persons. Thethi is self-governing, and, in fact, is practically a separate tribe. It clings strongly to exogamy, and does not intermarry at all within the tribe, nor does Petsaj. Thethi marries almost entirely with Boga, and this, continued through many generations, has made the Thethi differ somewhat in physical type from the rest of Shala.

619 2. *Shoshi.*—Origin as above. It lies south of Shala, on the right bank of Shala river. The rock of Lek Dukagin is in Shoshi territory. Shala and Shoshi reckon themselves as "Dukagini," former subjects, that is, of the now extinct chieftain family of Dukagin. Shoshi and Shala are entirely Catholic.

3. *Toplana.*—This was a very wild tribe and had the highest record for blood-vengeance of all the Christian tribes. It is situated in very rugged mountains difficult of access. Toplana told me it was "very old." Baron Nopcsa traced pedigrees to 1450, and considers that about that time it came in to its present site from Vasojevitch. Vasojevitch is known to have shifted its ground from somewhere near Focha in the Herzegovina to Medun, near Podgoritza, and thence to its present site. In one of these shifts it probably drove Toplana out.

The whole district occupied by the above seven tribes is often called Maltsia e Vogel, the little mountains. Also included in the diocese of Pulati is:—

4. *Nikaj.*—Here I was told that the tribe is mainly an offshoot from the Moslem tribe of Krasnichi, which, as we have seen, is brother to Hoti. Nikol, the ancestor, left Krasnichi while that tribe was still Christian, and Nikaj is all Catholic. One hundred houses of Nikaj, the Tsuraj, trace descent from a daughter of Nikol, who bore an illegitimate
[611] child by a cut-eared gipsy ("tsurrue," to cut or mark the ears). This is the only case of female descent I heard of. The cut ear suggests that the gipsy had been mutilated as a punishment and had fled to the mountains. The Nikaj people are dark and are a wild lot. Gipsy blood is possible.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ALBANIAN HOUSEHOLD

Society in the Albanian mountains was patrilineal, and took so little account of women that whereas the names of ancestors in the male line might be known for as many as twenty generations, those in the female line were forgotten after two or three. In the words of the Unwritten Law 'a man has blood, and a woman kin', i.e. a man has a pedigree, and a woman her own relatives, and 'a woman is anybody's daughter', i.e. comes from anywhere and has no pedigree.

As usual in patrilineal societies, all property and rights were vested in the men. So when a man married, his house belonged to him exclusively and not at all to his wife, neither priest nor law having bound him to endow her with his worldly goods. The Unwritten Law states further that 'a wife is a sack for carrying' things, i.e. she was in her husband's house to bear his children. It was also understood, however, that she must take an active part in the work of both the farm and the house. In consequence, the wife in a household containing only a married pair and their small children led a life of almost unrelieved hardship, all the relaxations and leisure going to the husband. Since the Unwritten Law forbade her to have any dealings with the outside world until she was old, she stayed at home to work while her husband went to market to shop and sell, visited government offices to discuss the payment—or non-payment—of his taxes, and arranged the future marriages of his children. Whether it was a kerchief, a daughter-in-law, or nothing at all that he bought for her, he never consulted her wishes and she might not murmur openly at his choice. Nor might she remonstrate with him if he idled when at home; any such criticism would only make him beat her. The Unwritten Law said that the husband was the head of the wife and might punish her for indiscipline as well as misconduct. There was plenty of secret grumbling of course. Thus a pretty young woman in Mat was heard to complain that her husband spent all the money he could find on coffee and cigarettes for himself and left her, after five years of marriage, 'without a rag to her back'. 'And it's for him I toil

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Mertur and some others were wholly Catholic. Nikç, Selcë, Hot, Kthellë and Lurë were more or less mixed Catholic and Mohammedan. Certain tribes such as Has, Bytyç and Krasniq are at the time of writing completely Mohammedan but were partly Catholic until three or four generations ago, as their genealogies testify. Lumë asserts that it has been completely Mohammedan since the coming of the Turks five centuries ago. It was also not fully tribal, since each bajraktar's following consisted not of a single kin or agglomeration of kins with the same ancestors, but of a number of little kins of varying ancestry.

There were also bajraktars in certain non-tribal areas, such as Shpat and Martanesh in central Albania. Here the dignity was not hereditary and localized, but moved with successive holders from family to family, from quarter to quarter or even from village to village. Fitness for military leadership of the local levies was always demanded, and that quality did not necessarily remain from one generation to another, in the same family, quarter or village. Hysejn Zavolina of the village of Shelcan was a famous bajraktar in Shpat in the last years of Turkish rule, but it was at Fushë e Kuqe in the more central village of Gjinar that he set up his standard. Hysejn Ramaj became bajraktar of Martanesh because he was as popular as he was competent. After having carried his standard to victory in Montenegro he 'got religion' and turned dervish. As Baba Hysejn (Abbot Hysejn) he presided first over the Bektashi monastery (tege) at Krujë and then over that at Martanesh and was buried in the monastery of Zerqan. When he took to the cloister the bajrak passed to Murat Xhabolli, who was from the Gjoni quarter and quite a different family. The great lawgiver, Mus Ballgjini, of the village of Gurakuq was bajraktar of the district of Çermenikë when Turkish rule over Albania ended, but his son did not inherit the office. When Albania developed a conscript army of European type, there could be no more bajraktars in central Albania. Officers led the conscripts, and there was no hereditary principle to preserve the ancient title as there was among the tribes of the north.

In certain areas of the north there were no bajraktars. Since beys were feudal lords of the soil it fell to them to lead their henchmen in war. So wherever there were beys of any importance there were no bajraktars. Mat was the classic instance. There were bajraktars to the north of it in tribal Kthellë and Lurë; there were

[the local military leader--Analyst]

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CHAPTER XII

ELDERS

[671] 622 It is impossible to understand the laws and customs of the Albanian mountains without a knowledge of the varieties and responsibilities of the elders. A man could be an elder not only in the literal sense but as a legal personage. Seven types developed in sequence one from another among the southern tribes.

888 Everywhere the word for 'elder' is (sing.) *plak* (plur. *pleq*), which is pure Albanian and means literally 'old man'. There is a corresponding feminine (sing.) *plaka*, 'old woman'. In households of any size there might be several men and women who were really old in years and were 'elders' in the literal sense. These were the first type. The majority were ordinary people and had no legal importance.

592 The idea of age disappears with the second type, found in every household irrespective of its size. Here there were always one man and one woman who bore the special title of 'old man (or elder) of the house' and 'old woman (or elder) of the house'. These under their more usual Albanian titles of master of the household and mistress of the household were not necessarily elders in the sense of 'older people'. They might have attained their position when under forty and have found themselves in authority at that comparatively early age over older men and women.

613 596 The third category of elders appeared as soon as a household split up and each brother or male cousin in it acquired his own house. Then, a 'brotherhood' (*vllazni*) was formed. In this community each new house was as much a separate entity as the parent one, and was no longer under the control of the master and mistress, the 'elders' of the old joint home. It had its own 'elders' of both sexes who managed all its affairs, external and internal. The 'old man' of the joint home, now administering a much smaller household, thus lost a proportionate share of his importance. But the new masters also lost some of theirs. So long as the family lived together any competent adult among them might deputise for the master in village or tribal affairs or in the administration of the communal home, but from the day they separated,

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the old master reserved such business for himself and his sons, leaving only their own concerns to the masters of the new houses. As he remained the eldest or the most capable of the brothers, his help and advice tended to be sought by the others, particularly in external business, and his opinion was more regarded by outsiders such as tribal or government authorities. So he developed into the 'old man (or elder) of the brotherhood'. As the generations passed and the houses of the original brotherhood split up in their turn, the dignity of brotherhood elder remained in his family, handed down inalienably from master to master. The term 'brotherhood elder' was little used, however; 'first (or head) of the brotherhood' was preferred. There was no woman elder of the brotherhood or any larger unit. The mistress of the household of a brotherhood elder had neither authority nor influence outside his house, as he had. She was a foreign importation into the brotherhood, a stranger to it in blood, her only duties being to bear her husband's children and to work in the house, her only rights proceeding from her fulfilment of those duties.

In course of time so many households split up that a number of new brotherhoods were formed. In some the sense of brotherhood or even cousinship with the others faded, and only a remoter feeling of kinship due to descent from a common ancestor persisted. The agglomeration of brotherhoods then constituted a 'kin' (*fis*). In this, the fourth type, each brotherhood retained its own elder, and at the same time looked up to the elder of the original brotherhood as leader, calling him 'elder of the kin' or 'head of the kin'.

In the next, fifth stage of development several kins united to form a village. They might be distantly related to each other as in the village of Vuksanaj in Shalë, or of quite different stock as in the village of Nangë in Lumë. If related, they remembered which kin descended from the eldest brother in the ancestral home and regarded the elder of that kin as the village elder. If not related, they selected one of the kin elders, preferably the head of the strongest kin, for that position. Alternative names for him were 'senior elder', 'senior headman' and 'head elder'. According to the usual pattern of development each kin and each brotherhood in the village retained its own elder. Already it is possible to understand such data as the following. In the tribe of Lurë there were twelve elders, two for each kin. In the village of Perlat there were two men called village elders or senior elders; in the last days

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and first cup of coffee, which were offered to any man of standing. 554
He lived in the same style as the rest of his social unit and was their equal in the eyes of the law. The latter point was clearer in the old days. If he were killed an ordinary blood feud ensued; if this was compounded, the price of his blood was no higher than an ordinary man's. If he killed someone, his life was forfeit in the usual manner to his victim's family. If he committed a crime against the community, he was liable to the usual punishments for such a crime and could be asked to give the community a rifle or other recognized article as security for his good behaviour in future. He had also the same social obligations as humbler tribesmen. These included serving in the tribal 'army', feeding the tribal 'youth', doing forced labour for the government, sharing communal labour for the village, and subscribing to public objects like buying an extra piece of communal pasturage or forest. He had also, like common men, to do military service and work annually without payment for a short period on the roads.

As a legal personage, however, an elder was on a higher footing 693
than ordinary tribesmen. If, for instance, a village elder were to 622
witness an oath in a case grave enough to require twenty-four 613
jurors, his single person counted as the twelve jurors who were left unspecified by the judging elder. Another elder did not count as high, for a village elder ranked higher than a kin elder, and the latter higher than a brotherhood elder. An elder's duties were twofold, administrative and legal. The former were an expansion of the master's, for he had to take the same fatherly care of his brotherhood, kin or village that a master took of his household and had to run it on much the same system. On the external side he had to present its case skilfully to higher authorities and defend it from oppression. Internally he must maintain law and order by checking the chief evils, assassination and damage to property. He had to try to nip quarrels in the bud by persuasive reasoning, arbitrate when they menaced and judge when they developed. He had to lend the weight of his presence not only to the giving of an oath but also to the bequeathing of a legacy to church or mosque, the planting of boundary stones, and (generally) the separation of brothers. The embodiment of the tribal law, he was at once advocate, judge and law-giver.

An elder's age and wealth did not matter to the ordinary 613
members of his social unit, who drew no invidious comparisons 554 622

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between him and themselves on those grounds. Provided he was correctly descended from the master of the ancestral household through a succession of what were conventionally called 'eldest' brothers, and were really the most competent, they accepted him as their elder as unquestioningly as the English nation accepts its king. Sometimes a new elder seemed unfit for his duties. Then the others took him with them when they went to work, and told him how his dead father judged or arbitrated: the most telling and least offensive method of training him.

When a dispute occurred it was the duty of the aggrieved party to inform his brotherhood elder first of all. When he did so and the matter was trifling and lay between two members of his brotherhood, this elder judged the case out of hand. If the disputants belonged to different brotherhoods, he consulted with the elder of the second brotherhood. When the case was graver he carried it to his kin elder, who might judge it straight away or carry it to the village elder. The village elder might in his turn pronounce judgement forthwith or call a General Assembly of the village in order to thrash the matter out in public and get a backing for any decision taken. Often the aggrieved party went straight to the village elder who was accessible to all tribesmen. In that event neither his kin nor his brotherhood had the right to resent the man's going over their heads. Moreover, the village elder's superiority was so well established that no resentment was likely to be felt. In no case was it lawful for an aggrieved man to seek advice from an elder in an outside village before he had consulted one of his own. If a kin elder or the brotherhood elders in the kin oppressed others in the village it was the duty of the village elder to repress them; and he had the right to summon the elders of the other kins in the village, if necessary, to his support. Article 10 in the Convention of Kurbin[1] betrays a strong feeling that there must be no shooting until the village elder has been informed of the dispute and given a chance to settle it by quieter means.

Elders could also act collectively. In the old days no new law could be passed, nor any judgement affecting their social unit be pronounced, unless they were present and gave their approval. When the bajraktar summoned a General Assembly for such important purposes as concluding a truce, trying a serious case or enacting new laws of tribal behaviour, their attendance was

[1] See Appendix, Document XI, p. 271.

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CHAPTER XIV

GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

619 Turkish suzerainty affected the life of the remoter areas so little that each tribe, and in non-tribal areas each region, was virtually a self-governing unit. The governing bodies in tribal areas were the General Assemblies and the Partial Assemblies. In Turkish times these meetings were often called *mexhlis* (from Arabic '*majlis*' meaning council, assembly, parliament). *Kuvend* is the Latin '*conventio*' (gathering) in Albanian dress. In non-tribal areas regional or village assemblies corresponded to the general and partial assemblies of the tribes.

The General Assembly was usually a tribal gathering, but the word *Kuvend* was used by the Albanians to indicate the national parliament during the German occupation in 1943–4 when Albanian nationalism expressed itself in rejecting the use of words of foreign origin.

In the fifteenth century there was a *Kuvend* of great historical importance when the men of the region of north Albania met to hear Lek Dukagjini, the lord of the extreme north, debate points of law with Skanderbeg, the lord of north central Albania.

[L34] Tribal assemblies brought together one or more tribes. These were plenary, attended by the whole tribe (or region) on the basis of 'one man from each house'. They were convened and presided over by the highest authority available. This was the bajraktar in most tribes, but one of the Gjomarkaj family or a bajraktar in Mirditë. In Dibër, Mat and Kurbin it was the head of the leading family, and in Çermenikë the regional elder. Miss Durham found the president elected in Theth, and stated that this innovation was spreading. Where a General Assembly of two or more tribes took place the meeting resulted from a conference of the chief men of each tribe, convened by the highest dignitary in each tribe and presided over by the highest of these high dignitaries.

613 623 Partial Assemblies too were plenary and were convened and presided over by the head of the unit concerned. The more important were formed by a village or a kin. In a document preserved for

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us by Father Gjeçov,[1] the last clause announces that though the Pecnikaj kin of Shalë laid down the law enunciated in clause 2, it had the support of the Lotaj, Abati (Abat) and Bobi (Bob) kins in doing so. Its first and its fourth clauses consider the adhesion of the brotherhood of Theth as well. Occasionally there was a partial meeting of a brotherhood, and at the bottom of the scale there were household meetings at which the master set some common problem before all the men in the family.

Generally speaking, assemblies of all types took place at irregular intervals, to meet some special need, though the demand that they should be called regularly once a year was not unknown.[2]

When a kin or smaller meeting was in question, the convener sent anyone he could find to call it. Bigger meetings were summoned by word of mouth by the public messenger. In Mat a gipsy beat out the summons on his drum and in Shpat church bells were rung.

Attendance at a plenary meeting was compulsory, non-attendance punishable by a fine. For instance, an elder of Kurbin who failed to turn up and could not satisfy the other elders that his absence was justified was fined five rams. An ordinary tribesman in the same area was fined one ram and in Kastrat 250 piastres. The strength and solidarity of the tribes were closely connected with the plenary character of their assemblies.

Most public meetings took place in the open air, as church houses were usually too small and schoolrooms and village halls did not exist. Meeting places had to be central and free from cultivation, rock, scrub and forest so as to provide adequate seating space. In Catholic areas the yard of the church was commonly used for General Assemblies and in Moslem areas that of the mosque. Assemblies of a village or kin could be held in the most central of the smaller clearings of the area, and a house was big enough for a brotherhood or household assembly.

Some meeting-places were specially famous. At Lesh, a thriving seaport at the mouth of the river Drin, and not the malarial inland townlet into which it has been converted by the advance of the Drin towards Italy, Lek Dukagjini and Skanderbeg met by preference, as it was centrally situated for both their domains. The place of meeting was probably the grassy sward near the ruined church on the right bank of the Drin, opposite the modern town.

[1] See Appendix, Document XII, p. 272

[2] See Appendix, Document V, § 16, p. 264.

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Again, a woman from Tërbac, near Elbasan, hearing that her son
562 had been killed at a third person's instigation, took his revolver and
*628 killed the instigator. Unfortunately for her, the date was about
[682] 1923 when a modern government was already functioning; she was arrested and tried for murder, but in view of the circumstances she was condemned to no more than a year and a half's imprisonment. The public were astonished to find that the government had punished a woman on much the same terms as a man.

[593] Assuming that a woman could steel herself to murder anyone, it is natural to find her avenging her father, son or brother. Given primitive Albanian ideas about the proprieties between husband and wife, and the feeling that the wife remained a member of her father's household, it is somewhat surprising to find one avenging her husband. A woman of western Mat went one day to the bazaar and there saw the man who had murdered her husband. In spite of the press of people she drew a revolver and shot him dead; as she had come provided with the weapon, there is little doubt that she did not act on the spur of the moment. About 1883 Fatime Almetaj, a woman born in Kostejë near Martanesh and married in Përvall, was busy baking one day while her husband talked to a neighbour. On hearing a gunshot she rushed out to find her husband already dead and the neighbour running away. She ran inside, seized her husband's rifle and again rushed out. The neighbour had already reached his own doorstep when she fired. As soon as she saw him fall dead, she re-entered her house and resumed her baking; her husband had been avenged, there were others in the family to feed, and the dough was getting cold. In neither of these cases do records show whose life the enemy took in return for the one she had taken; by right it should have been one of the males in her husband's family.

593 In certain cases both the avenger and the expiator of a murder
*628 might be drawn from outside the household directly concerned.
[826] For instance, if a murderer and his brother were separated, the avenger might kill the latter while his blood was boiling, a period estimated in Dibër at one hour and in Mirditë and elsewhere at twenty-four hours. When his blood had cooled he must not molest the separated brother, and might be required to find a guarantor that he would not do so. Conversely, a man separated from his murdered brother might avenge him during the regulation period, but not afterwards.

613 Sometimes the rule of 'boiling blood' was extended to larger
*628

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units. For twenty-four hours after a murder in Lumë, a district peopled by little groups of kinsmen, any man of the victim's kin might avenge him on any man of the criminal's kin. So long as members of this group survived no other would move. If they were killed off, other groups, beginning with the nearest neighbours, might seek vengeance. Within living memory this licence found dreadful expression in Theth, the beautiful northern part of Shalë. About 1890 a man who lost a lamb promised to give a cartridge to a shepherd if he found it. When the shepherd succeeded, the man went back on his promise saying he would 'give him five' (*sc.* fingers on the trigger) instead. For the moment the shepherd let the matter drop, but later met the man and asked once more for his promised reward. Again the man refused it, not too courteously, and was immediately killed by the incensed shepherd. Unfortunately, it was Easter Sunday and the murder took place in a meadow where all the men of Theth were gathered for the festival. Immediately the dead man's *vllazni* (brotherhood), comprising all the males descended from the same ancestor, sought vengeance on the murderer's brotherhood. These were not backward in replying, and within an hour fourteen men lay dead for the sake of one cartridge.

Whole tribes might be affected by the rule of 'boiling blood'. In the Malësi e Madhe if a Kastrati tribesman killed a Koplik man, any member of the latter tribe had licence for 24 hours to kill any man from Kastrati. The murderer was, therefore, bound to announce his crime at once so that his fellow-tribesmen might take cover. The time limit elapsed, vengeance lay as usual between the two households. In such cases of inter-tribal aggression each tribe became temporarily a single family in which each member represented the whole.

In Çermenikë, kinsfolk were sometimes fused into one family not by boiling blood as described above, but by a particularly atrocious murder such as that of a guest by his host, when 'circle after circle' was the rule. The guest's 'circle', consisting of his own household, his kinsmen in separate homes, his neighbours and the sons of the married daughters of his family, wherever these last might live, tried to kill the murderer, and failing to find him or other members of his household, they might kill one of his 'circle'. On succeeding, they held that they had avenged their relative's death, and their victim's family agreed. In other districts they